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**U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE TEAMS-UP WITH POSTAL INSPECTORS AND LOCAL
LAW ENFORCEMENT IN INVESTIGATING AND PROSECUTING
IDENTITY THEFT IN GREATER MODESTO AREA**

***Latest indictment includes one defendant who obtained approximately 23 lines of credit,
2 bank accounts, 3 cars, 2 apartments and an authentic California
driver's license under one victim's identity***

FRESNO-- United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott, San Francisco Field Division U.S. Postal Inspector In-Charge William P. Atkins, and Modesto Police Chief Roy W. Wasden announced today that a federal grand jury sitting in Fresno late yesterday charged SOMMERS NICOLE ROBERTSON, 25, CORINA ELLIA MUNIZ, 24, and ARKISA NALINI BROWN, 30, all of Modesto, in an eight-count indictment stemming from an identity theft scheme. The grand jury returned five of the counts against ROBERTSON on identity theft-related offenses including diversion of U.S. mail, credit card fraud, aggravated identity theft, bank fraud and being a felon in possession of ammunition found at her residence. The grand jury returned two of the counts in the indictment against ROBERTSON, MUNIZ, and BROWN on conspiracy and obstruction of justice charges. The U.S. District Court in Fresno issued arrest warrants for all defendants late yesterday afternoon.

This case is the product of a joint investigation conducted by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service in close partnership with the Modesto Police Department. The case is part of an ongoing effort between the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, local law enforcement, and the U.S. Attorney's Office to investigate and prosecute a rise in identity theft crimes in the greater Modesto area. Over the last several weeks, federal grand juries in Fresno have also returned indictments against three separate individuals stemming from similar identity theft schemes. Those cases have been investigated by U.S. Postal Inspectors in partnership with the Modesto and Ceres Police Departments. Other similar investigations are presently ongoing. In announcing this latest indictment, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and local law enforcement in the greater Modesto area point out that the Federal Trade Commission has set-up a one-stop web site for the public to learn how to deter, detect and defend against identity theft. That website address is <http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft/>

"Identity theft continues to be one of the fastest-growing crimes both in our region and across the nation. It creates major disruption in the lives of those victimized and hits hard the affected financial institutions. These indictments underscore local, state, and federal law enforcements' commitment to aggressively combating this most pernicious crime," said United States Attorney Scott.

According to the indictment and other court records from August 31, 2005, to January 30, 2006, ROBERTSON engaged in mail diversion, credit card fraud, identify fraud, and bank fraud as part of an identify theft scheme. According to investigating agents, ROBERTSON obtained approximately 23 lines of credit, 2 bank accounts, 3 cars, 2 apartments and an authentic California driver's license under the main victim's identity. The indictment also alleges that ROBERTSON, MUNIZ and BROWN conspired to and obstructed the criminal investigation in this case by engaging in a joint telephonic conversation on January 30, 2006 wherein ROBERTSON provided MUNIZ and BROWN instructions on the manner and means by which to locate, destroy and otherwise hide incriminating evidence of identity theft crimes. The indictment further alleges that MUNIZ and BROWN took steps to carry out their agreed-upon destruction of evidence in the case through MUNIZ's and BROWN's arrival at an apartment controlled by ROBERTSON on January 30, 2006; through MUNIZ's participation in a burglary of that apartment on February 1, 2006; and through MUNIZ's and BROWN's lying to investigating agents about their telephonic contacts with ROBERTSON to discuss the destruction of evidence.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Marlon Cobar, who is prosecuting the cases, the maximum statutory penalties for the charges against ROBERTSON are: diversion of mail - 5 years imprisonment, and a \$250,000 fine; felon in possession of ammunition - 10 years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine; bank fraud - 30 years imprisonment and a \$1 million fine. Notably, ROBERTSON's conviction for aggravated identity theft would carry an additional 2-year consecutive term of imprisonment in this case pursuant to the strengthened provisions of the 2004 federal Identity Theft Penalty Enhancement Act. Finally, the conspiracy and obstruction of justice charges against ROBERTSON, MUNIZ, and BROWN carry maximum statutory penalties of 5 and 10 years imprisonment respectively and a \$250,000 fine. However, any sentence in this case would be imposed by the U.S. District Court with the guidance of the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines.

The charges contained in the indictments are only allegations and the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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